

# TRAINING NOTES



## ROLLOVERS TAKE TOLL

### TRAINING DRIVERS AS THEY'LL FIGHT

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOSEPH MILLER

#### Current situation in Iraq

The enemy's primary method of attacking coalition forces outside forward operating bases (FOBs) is detonating roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or vehicle-borne IEDs. Insurgents travel down narrow canal roads in small pickup trucks while U.S. forces pursue them in bigger, wider HMMWVs. The enemy then collapses or blocks the road and initiates an IED or rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) ambush. Implementing direct-fire ambushes with AK-47s and RPGs is their secondary form of attack.

Many of these roads don't have markings or curbs and run parallel to canals and drainage ditches. Many roads in Iraq haven't been surveyed and often are narrow for Army vehicle operations. Our HMMWVs are about 7 feet wide and offer limited visibility because of either Level I or Level II armor plating. These vehicles also are loaded with radios and additional equipment that further limit visibility.

Units that maintain a continuous presence reduce the number of attacks on coalition forces in their areas of operation. In other words, a unit that patrols their sector continuously forces the enemy to find another area in which to operate. With this goal in mind, units must constantly modify their tactics, techniques, and procedures to keep the enemy from detecting patterns.



Sergeant First Class Johancharles Van Boers

*A HMMWV with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division patrols the roads in and around Fallujah following a major combat operation in November 2004.*

According to commanders, leaders, and Soldiers deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom II, about 70 percent of all combat missions are conducted mounted. Of these missions, 50 percent are conducted at night. Thus, units must constantly conduct mounted patrols in their sectors and travel on unfamiliar and narrow roads.

The heightened operations tempo is taking a toll on in-theater vehicle fatalities. From 12 September 2001 to 14 February

2005, the Army suffered 173 HMMWV accidents that killed 53 Soldiers. Our Strykers were involved in 20 accidents during the same period, killing five Soldiers.

#### Rollover trends

Leaders should incorporate several lessons learned during their pre-deployment training for mounted combat operations in theater. Drivers should be trained to operate their vehicles at faster speeds to avoid IEDs. Drivers, vehicle commanders, and gunners should be taught to function and communicate as a team. Crewmembers must be trained to scan and communicate road hazards with one another and receive instruction on driving, backing, and turning their vehicles on narrow roads. Additionally, units deploying to Iraq should receive their M1114 HMMWVs to train with before deployment. In the past, some units have gotten their M1114s in Kuwait and driven them into Iraq without additional training.

When leaders conduct their risk assessment before combat missions, they update and brief the tactical or enemy risks extremely well but often leave out the accident or hazard-based risks. Leaders must brief locations along the routes where the roads are narrow or have steep drop-offs. Drivers also should know the effects of current weather on driving. In sum, leaders must incorporate Composite Risk Management to account for all potential

hazards encountered on any given mission.

In the past, some commanders have directed their Soldiers not to wear their seatbelts in case they must egress the vehicle quickly. These commanders based their decision on the perceived threat of being trapped in a burning or overturned vehicle with the enemy firing on them. However, being hit with an IED or rolling over in an accident are the primary threats in Iraq. Seatbelts allow Soldiers to remain conscious and in their seats within a violently tumbling vehicle and then exit the vehicle after it stops. Commanders now know that, statistically speaking, it's better for their Soldiers to wear seatbelts.

Rollover drills must be rehearsed. Without rehearsals, there's no "muscle memory" instilled in the Soldiers when a rollover does happen. Gunners are crushed because they haven't physically trained to drop down into the gunner's hatch. Another problem is that some rollover drills often don't include procedures for egressing the vehicle through a single door. M1114s don't have an emergency opening that allows Soldiers to evacuate the vehicle quickly if it's upside down and the doors are blocked. These factors have caused Soldiers to drown because they were trapped inside their vehicles. Other Soldiers have suffered severe shock and hypothermia while trying to rescue comrades trapped in very cold water.

### Recommendations

Units currently deploying to Iraq, as well as the ones already there, must train day and night until they achieve proficiency as a team on the following tasks:

- Alerting other crewmembers and other vehicles of upcoming hazardous conditions;
- Recognizing when a road is too narrow and stopping the vehicle;
- Turning and backing the vehicle on a narrow road lined by canals;
- Safely driving through simulated traffic at faster-than-normal speeds to imitate traveling through areas with possible IEDs;
- Driving around cones without hitting them so crews can understand their vehicles' required clearances;
- Driving the vehicle partially off the road and correctly reentering the road without rolling over;
- Correctly transitioning from blackout drive to service drive, and then back to black-out drive;
- Conducting rollover drills in accordance with Graphic Training Aid 55-03-030, "HMMWV Up-armored Emergency Procedures Performance Measures" (Available through the Reimer Digital Library at [https://atiam.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/restricted/20779-1/GTA/55-03-030/5503030\\_TOP.HTM](https://atiam.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/restricted/20779-1/GTA/55-03-030/5503030_TOP.HTM). You must have an AKO user id and password to access this site.);



Courtesy photo

*Soldiers recover a HMMWV, which had rolled over into a ditch.*

- Rehearsing, at a minimum of once a month, rollover drills with the crew egressing out a single door with the combat lock engaged; and
- Training on all the above tasks when the unit receives its M1114s or Stryker slat armor in Kuwait.

Commanders and leaders must conduct a composite risk assessment before every combat operation, including follow-on missions. A composite risk assessment is a running estimate of the situation that must be updated continuously. It combines accidental risk factors such as weather, crew selection, terrain, illumination, or traffic with the tactical risk posed by the enemy.

Additionally, commanders and leaders must ensure all Soldiers wear their seatbelts during mounted combat missions outside the FOB. Leaders should rehearse rollover drills at least once a month, to include evacuating the vehicle through a single door. The Program Executive Officer-Combat Support and Combat Service Support currently is working to modify the HMMWV family of vehicles so Soldiers can egress quickly if they're upside down in water with all four doors blocked.

Vehicle accidents have claimed far too many of our Soldiers already and continue to kill at an alarming rate. We must do everything we can to turn the arrow down and bring our Soldiers home safe. Operations in Iraq are a whole different ball game from what we're used to in the United States. Take note of your lessons learned and train your Soldiers right.

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